

News Release

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Green Infrastructure Projects Promise Environmental Results in Ipswich River Watershed

(Boston, Mass. — June 9, 2009) — A series of low-impact development or green infrastructure projects are demonstrating techniques that show promise of improving water quality and stream flow in the Ipswich River Watershed.

The projects have been closely coordinated between EPA, the Massachusetts Dept. of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), several local communities and other stakeholders. A \$1 million EPA Targeted Watershed Grant has funded nine demonstration projects to implement water conservation projects within the Ipswich River Watershed. The watershed encompasses 21 communities from Burlington in the west to Ipswich in the east.

“EPA is proud of the results we are seeing due to the close collaboration between federal, state and local partners to find workable solutions that can be applied here in the Ipswich Watershed, and beyond to other stressed semi-urban ecosystems in New England,” said Ira Leighton, acting regional administrator of EPA’s New England office. “Common-sense solutions don’t have to break the budget, and can provide us with major environmental benefits.”

“DCR is grateful to EPA for funding these projects, which give us a chance to test out some new and perhaps better approaches to old problems,” said Richard K. Sullivan Jr., Commissioner of the Massachusetts Dept. of Conservation and Recreation. “We’re also grateful to our municipal partners in eight communities for helping make these projects a success.”

The towns of Ipswich, Wilmington, Reading, North Reading, Hamilton, Middleton, Topsfield, and the city of Peabody co-sponsored demonstration projects.

Today, local communities and state and federal officials toured four of the innovative low-impact development techniques. Several examples of low impact development and green infrastructure projects funded by EPA in the Ipswich River Watershed include:

- A vegetated or “green” roof, atop a refurbished building that provides affordable apartments for seniors, in Ipswich at Whipple Riverview Place. The green roof is absorbing and retaining rainwater, helping to reduce erosion and pollutants from entering the river.

- At Partridgeberry Place in Ipswich, a 20-lot subdivision is designed as a low-impact development by preserving open space, with the 20 homes clustered on ten acres and leaving 38 acres of undisturbed land. The development also uses narrower roads, “rain gardens” and specially designed grass swales. These features help absorb more of the rainfall that falls on the ground, filtering out pollutants from the paved surfaces and replenishing underground aquifers that flow to the Ipswich River.

- In a neighborhood next to Silver Lake in Wilmington, rain gardens and special permeable paving stones with underlying infiltration beds were installed along the road edge, in the public right-of-way. These colorful pocket gardens and permeable areas hold stormwater and let it soak into the ground, recharging the water tables, rather than running directly into the lake.

- At the Silver Lake town beach parking lot, a variety of low-impact development features help prevent polluted stormwater from reaching the lake. These include four types of permeable paving that allow stormwater to filter through the pavement instead of flowing across it; “bioretention” cells – planted areas that filter stormwater through soils and plantings – and two vegetated swales that replace piped outfalls that previously dumped untreated stormwater directly into the lake.

“Residents have spoken favorably about the visual improvements to the Silver Lake parking area, and they are certainly pleased that we have practically eliminated beach closures due to bacteria, as a result of this work,” said Wilmington Town Manager Michael A. Caira.

“The Ipswich River Watershed Association is excited by having local examples of cutting-edge methods for water conservation and management of polluted runoff,” remarked Kerry Mackin, Executive Director of the Ipswich River Watershed Association.

More Information:

- Ipswich River Targeted Watershed grant project
<http://www.mass.gov/dcr/watersupply/ipswichriver/index.htm>.

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